Pub Opinion

Media Gen

PUBLIC RATES THE MEDIA ABOVE BIZ, GOV'T, LABOR -- BUT ALSO WANTS IT CURBED

Public ranks 4 institutions in terms of...

1. Fairness

Media (45%)
Gov't (18%)
Biz (13%)
Labor (11%)

2. Honesty

Media (45%)
Gov't (14%)
Biz (14%)
Labor (9%)

3. Done most to promote the public good

Media (40%)
Gov't (21%)
Biz (17%)
Labor (11%)

4. Should have power cut back

Media (5%)
Gov't (38%)
Biz (14%)
Labor (27%)

Overall, how the public feels about...

5. Journalism in America

Basically ethical (23%)
Needs some improvement (45%)
Needs many improvements (8%)
Needs fundamental overhauling (9%)

6. Freedom of speech

Press abuses this privilege (40%)
Uses privilege responsibly (49%)

7. Libel suits against the media

Good, makes media careful (48%)
Bad, discourages reporting (33%)

8. Court fines for biased news

Favor (52%)
Oppose (23%)

-- from 1985 Los Angeles Times poll of 6,000 people

Trade Assns

WHO'S WHO IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

ELECTED. North American Public Relations Council (NAPRC) 1986 ofcrs: chrm, Luc Beauregard (pres, Beauregard, Hutchinson, McCoy, Capistran, Lamarre and Assocs, Montreal; formerly CPRS pres); chrm-elect, Patricia Trubow (dir, corp comns, Santa Fe Healthcare Systems, Gainesville; representing Florida PR Ass'n); sec'y-treas, Joe Awad (corp dpr, Reynolds Metals, Richmond, Va; representing PRSA).

NAPRC held its meeting during PRSA's annual conference. For the first time, 30,000 North American practitioners were represented at the same meeting.

Current agenda is to write a common code of ethics for all participating org'ns and to explore a common accreditation program.

Participating org'ns include: 1) PRSA, 2) CPRS, 3) American Society of Hospital Mktg & PR, 4) Agricultural Rels Council, 5) Nat'l School PR Ass'n, 6) Religious PR Council, 7) Baptist PR Ass'n, 8) Texas PR Ass'n, 9) Florida PR Ass'n, 10) Southern PR Federation, 11) Women in Comns Inc, 12) Council for the Advancement & Support of Education. An observer from 13) IABC also participated.

pr reporter

The Weekly Newsletter of Public Relations, Public Affairs & Communication

603 / 778 - 0514

Vol.28 No.49
December 16, 1985

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Big

Books/Pubns

CAN ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES, TRANSLATED AND COMMUNICATED THOROUGHLY, MAKE CORPORATE CULTURE TECHNIQUES WORK? OR IS IT A SHAM?

Does "corporate culture" have practical value? Or is it an esoteric term that has caught fire because of zealous authors searching for new applications of old ideas? "To put it bluntly, can we manage organizations any better with the help of the concept than we could before?" asks Michael Thomas, principal, PA Consulting Services Ltd. in an article appearing in Britain's Personnel Management magazine (Sept '85): "In Search of Culture: Holy Grail or Gravy Train?"

The Term "Culture" Comes From Social Anthropology

It means "The set of habitual & traditional ways of thinking, feeling & reacting that are characteristic of the ways a particular society meets its problems." Organizational psychologist Edgar Schein of MIT amplifies the definition to apply to organizations: "Culture is not the overt behavior or visible artifacts that one might observe if one were to visit the company. It is not even the philosophy or value system which the founder may articulate or write down in various 'charters.' Rather it is the assumptions which lie behind the values and which determine the behavior patterns and the visible artifacts such as architecture, office layout, dress codes, and so on."

Thomas sees a severe lack of methodology. What presently exists, he says, is highly judgmental. "Though I have been somewhat scornful of the higher nonsenses perpetrated by the culture vultures, I do believe that the culture debate is largely beneficial. The methods of some change programs have been sharpened by the debate and have in turn contributed to it." Practitioners have an opportunity to supply needed techniques.

Corporate culture is not an easy concept to grasp. It is:

1. Elusive. Unarticulated assumptions -- which even members of the culture are unaware of -- are often its cornerstone. Identifying it isn't easy.

2. Learned. Behavior is learned via 2 methods, says Schein: a) Trauma -- coping with some threat by erecting defense mechanisms, or b) Positive Reinforcement -- actions which seem to work become entrenched.

3. May well be out of date. Lessons of the past may become irrelevant or even disabling. At best, cultures will foster harmless superstitious behaviors -- once-important activities that now have little relevance to the outside world.

4. Can be a brake on change. Changing strong cultures demands enormous energy and tends to either take considerable time or have catastrophic consequences.

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Once The Illusive Nature Of "Culture" Is Grasped, Can It Help Us Do Our Jobs Better?

Does it have practical application? Yes. Thomas believes it helps in:

1. Formulating strategy. Organizational strategies are often based on internal value systems (about the nature of the biz, the marketplace, the competitive environment) that can appear arbitrary or even capricious to an outsider. The soundness of the value system affects the success of the strategy.

2. Implementing strategic change. When a chosen strategy violates cultural rules & values, understanding how cultures are formed will help shape new ways of operating, embedding new values.

3. Merger planning. Many mergers fail, not because the original strategic concept was wrong but simply because the companies were incompatible. This is often attributed to friction between "barons" but the reasons may be more fundamental. Prior study of the organizations' values might be relevant.

4. Competitive analysis. If it is the case that strategies are constrained by cultures/values, both in their formulation & implementation, then cultural analysis of competitors becomes significant.

As an example, British Airways' change program -- to improve levels of customer service -- has led in the last 2 1/2 yrs to a raft of initiatives: a) definition of standards of performance; b) constant feedback of consumer response; c) constant pressure on mgmt to show progress; d) extensive training, emphasizing customer service as a "value"; e) involvement of all levels of staff thru specially convened workshops, "customer first" teams & seminars; f) conventional "campaign" activities. "This is anything but cosmetic change! 40,000 people are being asked to accept a new value, namely the pre-eminence of the customer."

An Organization's Values Determine OK & Not-OK Behavior

They must translate into viable strategy. Thomas recommends:

1. Check whether the present strategy needs to change. If so, is there time to implement a new value? Or should the strategy merely be modified?

2. If change is necessary, look at how the org'n transmits its values -- mgmt style, organization of work, recruitment practices, employment policies, pay, building design, etc. Look at actual behavior, not rhetoric.

3. Decide how these "communication channels" can be programmed with a new message; and how contradictory messages can be neutralized.

4. Ensure that sr mgrs understand the implications of the new message and changes required of them.

5. Give special atttention to your organization's opinion leaders, convincing them to "live the new message."

6. Change those structures, systems, policies & practices that threaten to give out messages which contradict the new one.

7. Continually reinforce, formally & informally, the new values.

8. Try to keep to a small number of values, preferably one. Organizations simply can't simultaneously provide the highest quality product, with the best service, fastest delivery, most features & cheapest price. Not only would it be economic nonsense, but employees would be horribly confused.

USE OF ESTABLISHED COLORS IN GRAPHIC SYMBOLS CAN GAIN "COLOR OWNERSHIP"

"Since color serves as visual shorthand for communicating an identity, 'color ownership' significantly improves the speed and accuracy with which consumers recognize a company," explains James Shennan, pres, S&O Consultants (SF).

Its survey of America's 50 top retailers shows 1) red & yellow dominate fast food; 2) red & blue, service stations, 3) blue, hotels/motels & supermarkets, 4) red, mass merchandisers such as K-Mart, Radio Shack. Some considerations when choosing colors for your organization's signage:

¶Accentuate dominant colors by placing them against a white background. 35% of those surveyed do.

¶Red in fast food signage and red & blue in both hotels & service stations are examples of overusage. Red is heavily used in the graphic identities of McDonald's, Wendy's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Jack-in-the-Box, Shoneys, Big Boy, Pizza Hut & Dairy Queen. Me too-ism?

¶Holiday Inn chose a color unique to the hotel industry -- green. "Not only is green a high quality & high visibility color, but it gives Holiday Inn proprietary ownership of the color in the hotel business."

¶Shell's yellow symbol on red background is another success story. Even when the name is dropped from signs, company is still readily identified.

Ownership of shapes is perhaps even more powerful in a logo. Our vote for 3 of the greatest trademarks go to companies which have achieved shape identity.

1. Target Stores whose bull's-eye is so strong it is often used alone in store signage & ads.

2. Shell owns the shape which is its name.

3. Sunoco goes a step further. Its diamond is pierced by an arrow which points toward the service station being signaled.

USEFUL ITEMS FOR PRACTITIONERS

¶News release samples wanted for textbook on writing/media placement. Samples should demonstrate: a) high imagery words, examples, metaphors, analogies, similies to help create reality for an audience while maintaining appropriate news style; b) particularly newsworthy leads; c) verbatim success with one or more wire service placements. Releases used will receive credit lines. Book will be published by Prentice-Hall, written by Kerry Tucker. Send releases to him at Nuffer, Smith, Tucker, 3170 4th Ave, San Diego 92103.

¶Training is one of the best ways for practitioners to effect increased managerial communication within an organization, feels Ladonna Robson of Los Alamos Nat'l Laboratory. After devising a highly sophisticated, organizationwide training program, she offers 2 prime bits of advice: 1) Start mgmt training with middle mgrs, not at the top. This way you get both a bubble up & a bubble down effect. 2) Don't bring in any speakers that you haven't seen in action -- preferably before organizations or groups similar to or relevant to yours.